

Stay

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## 1. Into the Wilds

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**\*\*Author's Note:\*\*** Welcome to my first video game inspired fanfiction! I suck at summaries and titles, so I apologize. Please don't judge me too harshly should I get some places/people mixed up. I love the Dragon Age series and just couldn't get this idea out of my head. I am sure that this has been done before and is super cliché, but nonetheless, I feel the need to write it. Anyway, this is meant to just be a cute little thing that fills the gap between the end of Dragon Age: Inquisition and the Trespasser DLC. Two years are said to have passed, which are generally unknown to you as the inquisitor. So, there will be spoilers of the ending of the game, not necessarily the Trespasser DLC.

I don't expect this to go on for too long. It will probably just end up being a few chapters. However, I always enjoy/welcome feedback and

suggestions. Feel free to leave a review. Oh, and prepare for cheese, obviously.

**\*\*Chapter 1 " Into the Wilds\*\***

"Then we'll head there. Maybe this time we'll actually find him."

Josephine sighed, her eyes darting down to the piece of parchment clutched in her hands. She could usually be seen with one these days, scurrying after the Inquisitor, attempting to coerce her into actually following and completing the full schedule that her title and the defeat of Corypheus awarded.

"If you think that's best," Josephine said with regret, "I suppose the meetings with the ambassadors can wait."

The Inquisitor spun toward her advisor, her dark locks bouncing against the top of her shoulders. "We have to find him. We have to find Solas."

It was always her defense, and she knew it. Ever since he had disappeared months ago without a word, she had made it her priority to find him, much to the disagreement of some of her advisors and companions. But, she had to find him. It was no longer for the Inquisition she searched. It was for herself and her broken heart.

They had met in such a whirlwind—the scenes of which flashed before her in the span of a second, causing a pang in her heart.

"I think Josie's only concerned that the ambassadors will grow impatient," Leliana jumped to the rescue. Her eyes darted from Josephine to the Inquisitor. "This will be the third time postponing the meeting, after all."

The Inquisitor sighed. "I'm sorry to keep putting you in this position, Josephine. I'm still not used to the politics of all of this. I trust that you can come up with some excuse to get me out of it."

"Dodging the ambassadors again, I see." The commander of the Inquisition's army ducked into the war room, closing the door behind him. The heavy wood groaned loudly on the old hinges. "I don't think any of us can fault that."

"Thank you for joining us, Cullen," Leliana greeted sarcastically, a small smile on her lips.

"Yes," Josephine agreed. "You have exquisite timing."

Cullen walked up to the large table with the equally enormous map spread out across it. "Sorry I'm late. There was a problem with one of the soldiers. It seems he thought that the celebration of Corypheus' defeat was still going on months after the event."

The Inquisitor smiled. "Good thing we have a capable commander to remind our soldiers that there is still work to be done."

Cullen returned the smile, lingering for just a moment. Then he

cleared his throat. It was down to business. "So, what are we making an excuse for?"

"The Inquisitor has decided that it is in the best interest of the Inquisition to head to the Arbor Wilds immediately to search for any sign of Solas," Josephine informed, still crossing off some unknown items on the schedule.

"Well surely your spies, Leliana-" Cullen began, attempting to find another way.

"No," the Inquisitor cut in. "I have to go there."

"Is that really wise?" He had spoken before thinking better of it. Now, he noticed a veil pass over the Inquisitor's soft features. Without her saying a word, he knew that she was shutting down, growing defensive. If he had learned anything while serving the Inquisition, it was that the Inquisitor was stronger than she looked and quite immovable when wearing that expression. She had possessed something similar when facing down Corypheus. "I mean," he added quickly, "our resources are still limited. It might be more beneficial to wait another month or two."

The Inquisitor shook her head. "It might be too late then. I understand that it might be difficult to spare the people and the supplies needed to go back into the Arbor Wilds. I won't ask anyone to inconvenience themselves for meâ€"for what might be a dead end anyway." She sighed, rubbing her forehead, and moved slowly to the door.

"Inquisitor, there would be a whole slew of people vying to accompany you if you were to just ask," Leliana reassured. "You've done the entire world a great service in defeating Corypheus. You ask for anything and it is yours."

"No, I won't do that. Josephine, I leave the ambassadors in your capable hands. And, Leliana, I need you to continue searching for clues to Solas' whereabouts in case this doesn't lead anywhere. I know that it is an impossible task, since he apparently doesn't want to be found," she winced, "but he has to be out there. I'll go to the Arbor Wilds myself. Don't alert anyone. I don't want to disturb them." With that, the Inquisitor exited the war room.

The room was left in a tense silence for no more than a minute. It was broken by Leliana saying what they all were thinking. "Sometimes it is hard for us to remember that the Inquisitor is just a woman."

"Since the beginning, there's been so much asked of her," Josephine chimed in, "without any thought to whether or not she even wanted this."

"She was never given a choice," Cullen whispered. "She was thrown into this mess. The rest of us volunteered. She's had the fate of the entire world upon her shoulders. The rest of us can claim to understand and want to help alleviate her stress, but none of us can truly know what she has gone through."

Leliana laughed. "Hell, she slept for four days straight after dealing with Corypheus. That should have been indication alone. Let

her have this one, but I don't feel comfortable letting her go alone."

"You're right. Josephine and Leliana, do as she requests. Keep the peace. Keep it quiet here," Cullen decided. "I'll go with her personally. She shouldn't have to deal with this alone."

xXx

Tanwen Lavellan ran her fingers through her brunette locks, brushing them up into a ponytail, showing off her pointed ears. She already donned her battlemage mail, which she wore out on each expedition. She didn't necessarily expect trouble, but even she was aware that heading out to the Arbor Wilds by herself wasn't the safest decision.

She turned from the set of drawers, her eyes catching on the open door leading out to the balcony. And, she stopped. Suddenly her haste could wait. She stepped slowly to the doors, lightly touching the frame as she passed through. Outside, the sun peaked through the clouds, casting rays of light upon the earth. But, she was distracted by visions of the past.

\_Solasâ€|\_

\_And a kiss. A perfect kiss.\_

\_But, he had warned her. \_

\_She had pushed, and he had warned her.\_

Tanwen scoffed in disbelief.

"Everything alright?"

The voice interrupted her, but perhaps for the best. She pivoted to see Cullen joining her on the balcony.

"I knocked," he said with a shrug.

She smiled and looked away. "He tried to tell me."

The commander leaned next to her. "Solas?"

She nodded. "He tried to tell me right here, actually. 'It would be kinder in the long run,' he had said. But, I was so blind. I just thought that he was scared or shy."

"You had no way of knowing what he would do. None of us did."

"But, if I had listened to him instead of to my heart then all of this could have been avoided."

Cullen grasped her hand comfortingly. "At least you followed your heart. That's not something all of us can claim."

"'All of us'?" she repeated, raising an eyebrow.

He immediately released her hand, cleared his throat uncomfortably, and turned away. "Yes, well, I'm not all regiment and routine. But,

we should go investigate this lead of Leliana's."

"Wait, 'we'? You're not coming along," Tanwen insisted.

Cullen smiled. "You honestly think that we would let you go off by yourself? Whether you like it or not, you're stuck with me."

His smile was contagious. A grin spread across Tanwen's face.

"Well then, commander, shall we?"

## 2. Alive

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**\*\*Summary:\*\*** Months after he disappeared, her heart is still broken. So determined and so distracted with trying to find Solas, Inquisitor Lavellan is blind to all else. But, when the commander of her army decides to finally reveal his feelings, will she finally be able to accept Solas' absence?

**\*\*Author's Note:\*\*** So, I went with Inquisitor Lavellan. She was actually the latest version that I played. I went with the name Tanwen, as well, because I find it quite lovely and fitting. It is a name I have had under my belt for a while now. It means White Fire, I believe, which is pretty cool. I hope everyone likes it. I picked the Arbor Wilds for Cullen and the Inquisitor to venture to because I figured out of all of the locations it was the least investigated. Besides, it has quite beautiful scenery in the game.

Thank you for the reviews and support so far. I really do appreciate it.

**\*\*Chapter 2 - Alive\*\***

Each footstep brought on another memory:

\_The Sentinels protecting their home, their legacy.\_

\_Morrigan insisting that she partake of the Well of Sorrows. That distrust.\_

\_Solas fighting alongside of her, discovering their past togetherâ€¦|\_

\_Yet, his separation from it all.\_

"Anything yet?" Cullen whispered next to her.

Inquisitor Lavellan didn't have to glance over at him to notice his presence. She could sense him right there beside her. But, she had been so entranced in images of the past, so deeply invested in discovering any remnants of Solas that she had ignored him.

She shook her head. "No, nothing. At least we won't have to worry about the Sentinels. Last time we were here, they had said they would move on. And, I believe them. I don't feel like they still inhabit this forest. They are gone."

"I suppose that's one less thing we have to worry about."

Like the Inquisitor, Cullen had come prepared. He had donned his armor, which he rarely didn't wear anyway, and had strapped on his sword. The Arbor Wilds were much less traversed than any of the other locations they had traveled to. While they could certainly put up a fight, it wasn't known what could happen to them.

"You didn't have to come, Cullen," Tanwen Lavellan said quietly, keeping her gaze away from him.

He scoffed, stepping over some dangerously placed tree roots. "Someone had to look after you. We can't have the Inquisitor succumbing to something as trivial as getting lost in the woods after taking down the biggest threat this world has seen."

Tanwen rolled her eyes. "If that's how capable you see me now, I would have hated to hear what you thought of me before Corypheus."

He chuckled light-heartedly. "That's not what I meant."

She stopped, causing him to stop, too. She sighed, pivoting to face him. "I appreciate you joining me, I really do. But, I should have just come out here alone."

Cullen started toward her. "I didn't mean--"

"I know," she interrupted. She wrapped her arms around herself tightly. The mask she always had to wear was beginning to crack and he was about to witness it. It was evident that there was something deeper happening, something that he had unknowingly drudged up. But, swiftly she turned away, gathering her composure. "I'm sorry, Cullen. I know that you didn't mean anything by what you said."

"I should have known," he stated, stepping forward.

She looked at him and smirked. "So, we are supposed to expect you to be a commander to our soldiers, strong, charming, and now all-knowing? I don't think even Mythal could claim that."

"You give me too much credit, I'm afraid."

"Or perhaps, sometimes, not enough."

"Tanwen," Cullen breathed.

A blush spread across her pale cheeks as he closed the distance. The unknown origin of it caused her heart to race. She attempted to subdue it with more talk, but that only worked against her. "You've done more for the Inquisition than any of us have given you credit for. I suppose the same could be said for Josephine and Leliana, but you—" During this," she sighed, "rather trying time you've been ready to help and support me."

"Inquisitor?"

She shook her head. Her cheeks were burning and she couldn't make them stop. "I meant everyone," she corrected. "You have helped support everyone."

"Inquisitor," Cullen repeated, nodding toward something behind her. She just noticed that his amber eyes were fixated beyond her. "Is that the place?"

Tanwen spun around, the moment and her reaction forgotten. She stared off in the direction Cullen had indicated, squinting to determine if it was indeed their destination. Nestled behind a thick layer of trees and hanging vines, which could have gone completely unnoticed, was what appeared to be a stone structure.

She walked toward it, her heart racing for a completely different reason now. In her best imaginings, Solas would be right within these ruins. That possibility made her throw caution to the wind. It made her step with fervor and anticipation.

Cullen placed a hand lightly on her arm when they had reached the hanging vines. "Careful now," he whispered. It was so natural that it seemed like just another impulse.

Listening to her commander, she slowed her pace. She slipped through the vines soundlessly and gracefully. It was actually a bit of a clearing that they then found themselves in. Trees encircled the area where stone ruins of what once must have been a beautiful building had stood.

She silently prepared her staff, in case they should run into an unforeseen obstacle. Cullen already had his sword drawn and at his side. But they were able to close the distance to the ruins without any incident.

"We should check inside," Inquisitor Lavellan said. "If he's here, he'll be inside."

"Let me go first," Cullen insisted.

Following her commander, the Inquisitor stepped through the partially intact doorway. Leaves littered the cracked floor, while moss and vines grew up the dust-covered walls. The farther they ventured inside, the less sunlight reached them.

"Watch your step, Inquisitor," Cullen whispered. "It's impossible to see beyond this point."

"I think I might be able to help with that."

Tanwen opened her left hand, revealing the mark and the bright green glow that emanated from it. It wasn't much, but it certainly gave them something to see by. The room was illuminated. Cullen looked back at her and smirked.

She shrugged. "At least it's good for something."

"Come on."

They walked closer together, so that the light from the mark fell over both of them.

"These mosaics are incredible," Cullen commented. The walls to either side of them were lined with impressive and colorful mosaic designs, which for the most part appeared untouched.

"The ancient elves had the time to perfect their skills in the arts," she said.

"And now?" he asked.

"Now, it seems, the elves have to spend their time trying to survive."

"I'm sorry," he said, looking at her.

"Cullen, don't." She stopped and glared at him. "That pity in your eyes is unwarranted. It would be the same as me judging the entire human race just from you." She paused. "Life with my clan was perfectly ordinary."

Cullen put a hand comfortingly on her shoulder, coming in close. "I meant no offense," he whispered. "In the cities, it's easy to see the hardship that elves live in. It is also easy for people to ignore it." He shook his head, smiling. "It wasn't pity."

Hesitating, he let his fingers linger above her ear for just a second. Then he gently traced it to its point. At his touch, she went rigid. A blush erupted on Tanwen's cheeks. Her first impulse was to jerk away, but she held her ground, entranced and curious.

"You know, you say that your life before, with your clan, was ordinary," he began. "Yet, you are so extraordinary. Everything you do, everything you are part of."

"I suppose I can't take all of the credit," Tanwen breathed, her hand aching where the mark tore into it.

Her heart pounded in her chest. Her face was so warm. She was grateful for the lack of proper lighting so that he couldn't tell just how much she was blushing. She had always been so strong and so steadfast throughout everything. Solas had been the one to get past all of that. He had been her teacher and her companion. Everyone thought of her as their leader, but Solas had been the one who she had relied upon.

When she had first discovered that he had disappeared, she had known that he wouldn't be found. If he didn't want to be, there would be no possibility. Still, she searched for him. She searched even now. After all, that was the whole purpose of why they were out there. He had drawn something out of her, and with his absence, that too had seemed to waver and disappear.

But, what she felt now was alive.

An echo, stone hitting stone, startled both of them. They peered ahead, into the darkness, waiting. Cullen held up a single finger to his lips, indicating that they should both proceed in silence. With the moment broken, he took the lead with her close in tow, carrying



the light. Just ahead of them was a set of stone steps leading down into a black abyss. The noise had come from there. They stopped at the head of the stairs and stared down.

"Stay here," Cullen instructed. "I'll check it out first."

"How are you going to see?"

"It's less about seeing and more about drawing out any danger."

Tanwen scoffed. "Why don't we both inspect it together then?"

"We don't know what could be down there. I'd feel more comfortable if you stayed here until the coast is clear."

"I wish everyone would stop treating me as if I was about to break," she vented. "I'm not fragile. I can take care of myself."

Cullen chuckled. "Goodness you're stubborn. Will you just wait here for a moment? For me, please."

She rolled her eyes, shifted her weight, and got comfortable. She watched him descend into the darkness, until he was consumed altogether. Time seemed to tick by without a word from him. She started to grow impatient and concerned. It was difficult to say how much time had actually passed, but it seemed like an eternity.

"Cullen, what did you find?" she called out, hoping for a response.

Nothing.

"Cullen," she tried again.

Nothing.

"Cullen, I'm coming down," she said, making up her mind. It had been too long and now he wasn't answering her. Her heart raced with the thought that her commander could possibly be in trouble. "Cullen!"

She hurried as fast as she could in the darkness. The dust blanketing the steps made them slick. She was only a couple from the bottom when she lost control of her balance and her feet slid from beneath her. She hurtled toward the ground. Her staff fell out of her hands, clattering against the stone flooring. But, before she managed to hit it, as well, she fell against something much softer.

"It's ok. I'm here," Cullen soothed.

She looked up into his face, finding herself in his arms. He had come out of nowhere and had caught her before she had hit the ground. She righted herself, wrenching herself free from him.

"Why didn't you answer me?" she asked angrily. "I-I thoughtâ€¦" She trailed off and sighed instead.

As a gesture, Cullen picked up the staff off of the ground and handed

it back to the Inquisitor. "That noise we heard was just stones settling. It was bound to happen at some point, and it was just a coincidence that it occurred while we were present."

"Well that's a relief," she muttered.

"I felt torches along these walls. You wouldn't mind, would you?"

Inquisitor Lavellan smiled. With a wave of her hand, and the use of elemental fire magic, the sconces burst into light, sufficiently brightening the room. There was broken pottery, stone benches, and defaced statues. And, in the middle of the room were the remnants of a fire and a makeshift bed consisting of leaves and brush.

Her breath caught in her throat as she carefully approached the scene. The embers from the fire were still warm. She could feel the heat barely emanating off of them. The leaves and brush were disturbed, as if just slept on. This was what Leliana had discovered. It was a small camp that had never meant to have been found. But, it wasn't Solas, and it wasn't Solas' work, either. He wouldn't have been so careless.

"Whoever was responsible for this can't be far," Cullen was saying from over her shoulder. "We may be able to pick up a trail."

She shook her head.

"We could still find him," he assured. "Solas has to be out there."

"Cullen, stop!" Her hand was trembling and several tears rolled down her cheeks. She swiftly wiped them away, embarrassed and ashamed. "We aren't going to find him," she said quietly. "It is all too clear now that he doesn't want to be foundâ€"not by me, not by anyone. We can't even be sure this was his doing." She shook her head again. "I just feel so embarrassed for putting all of you through this. I'm sorry."

"You have nothing to apologize about," Cullen attempted to sooth. But, he received a glare in response.

"This ends today," the Inquisitor declared. "We aren't going to look for Solas anymore."

End  
file.